

—RURAL WATER SYSTEMS—

Most of us can have an ample supply of good quality water just by turning the faucet's handle (and keeping the bill paid). There are places in Montana, though, where the look, or smell, or amount of water is not appealing, or healthful, or plentiful. Some sources are highly mineralized and/or extremely limited in quantity. Water has to be trucked to some communities.

Two rural water systems now in the planning stages would relieve the situation for thousands of Montanans. Both have been proposed because the supply of high-quality drinking water is not sufficient. The purpose of each is to provide drinking water and water for livestock (but not for agricultural irrigation). The areas that would be served are shown in Figure 1 (see page 3).

One employee of DNRC's Conservation and Resource Development Division (CARDD) is working full-time to help make these systems a reality. Table 1 (see page 4) presents an over-view of these two ambitious undertakings.

Benefits

For numerous individual water users and communities, the systems will provide an alternative supply of potable water with significantly better chemical quality than existing sources of groundwater and/or surface supplies. This will result in reducing debilitating physical conditions or diseases that are either directly attributable to, or are aggravated by, drinking water with elevated levels of dissolved minerals.

The projects will also provide an opportunity for some existing public water supplies to receive water from new treatment plants that will meet existing and proposed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for drinking water quality. In some instances, the systems will replace

existing public water supplies that have substandard water treatment facilities, or that will be faced with costly system upgrades in order to meet forthcoming EPA standards.

Livestock producers also stand to benefit. The proposed regional systems will allow for livestock watering throughout the rural service areas, where many existing sources are only marginally effective. The average weight gain per animal unit for beef cattle is projected to increase by 30 pounds when water from the regional systems becomes available.

With regard to prospective economic development, high-quality drinking water will provide an increased incentive for business and industry that would be reluctant to re-locate operations, or site new facilities, in an area with marginal to poor drinking water.

Management/Regulatory

A regional water authority, which is a duly constituted governmental agency, has been created for each system.

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has primacy within Montana for administration and enforcement of public water supply law administered by EPA under authority provided by the federal Clean Water Act. DEQ will classify the off-reservation portion of the Dry Prairie Project and the non-Core portion of the North Central Project to be "purchased water systems." A purchased water system is one that obtains its water from another source or supplier that is also regulated, and whose product meets the minimum standard requirements.

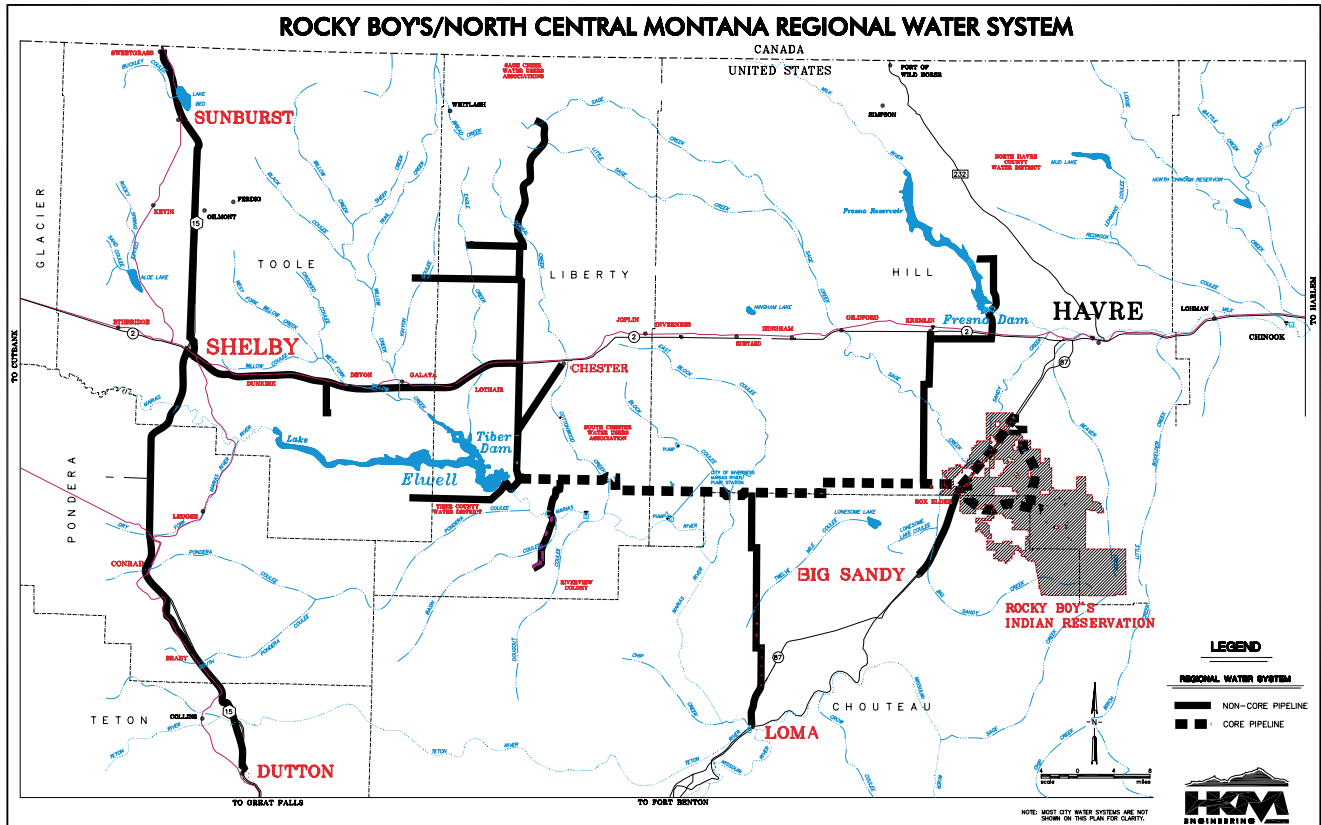
The Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) of the U.S. Department of the Interior has been designated as the lead federal agency for the planning, design, and construction phases of the Dry Prairie Project and is expected to be so designated for the North Central Project, as well. Funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress would be channeled through USBR to the project sponsors.

Rural Water. . . continued on page 5



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FIGURE 1. AREAS TO BE SERVED BY REGIONAL WATER SYSTEMS



Map provided by HKM Engineering, Inc.

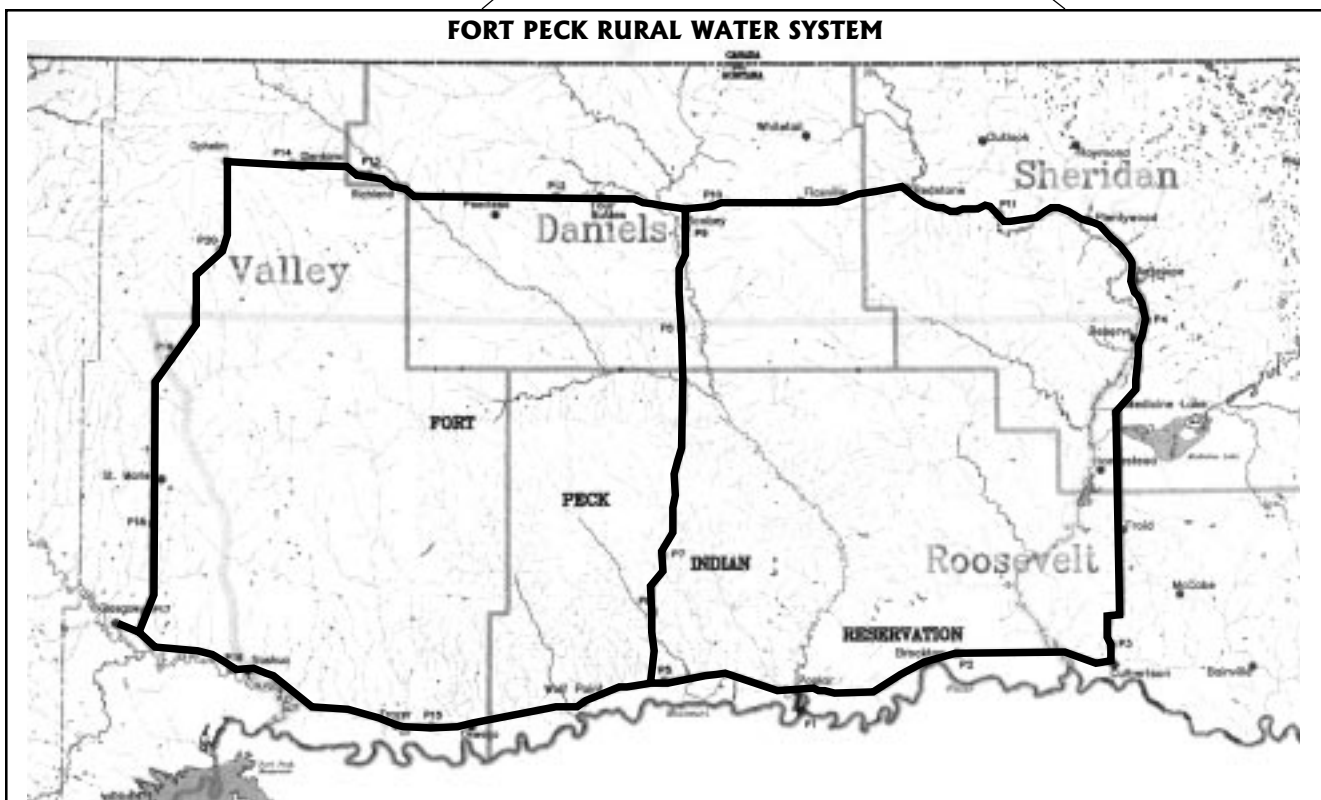
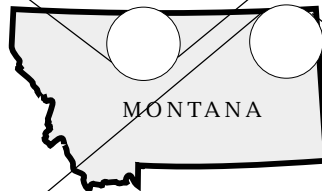


TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF TWO PLANNED REGIONAL WATER SYSTEMS

	FORT PECK RURAL WATER SYSTEM— DRY PRAIRIE	ROCKY BOY'S RURAL WATER SYSTEM— NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA
Authorization	The 106th Congress (Public Law 106-382) authorized the Fort Peck Rural Water System; Dry Prairie is the off-reservation portion of this system.	The 107th Congress is currently considering authorization of the Rocky Boy's Reservation Rural Water System; North Central Montana is the name of the "Non-Core" portion of this system. ¹
Population To Be Served	Approximately 28,000 persons (1990 Federal Census)	Approximately 18,000 people now (1995 figure); an estimated 30,000 at the end of 50 years
Geographical Area To Be Served	Communities and rural users within Sheridan, Daniels, Roosevelt, and the eastern half of Valley Counties in northeastern Montana, including the Fort Peck Reservation (Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes)	Communities, rural water districts, Hutterite colonies, and other rural users within Toole, Liberty, eastern Pondera, western Hill, northern Chouteau, and extreme northeastern Teton Counties in north central Montana, including the Rocky Boy's Reservation (Chippewa Cree Tribe)
Intake	In the Missouri River	In the area of Tiber Dam, within Lake Elwell on the Marias River
Treatment Plant	13-million-gallon-per-day plant to be located on the Fort Peck Reservation in the general vicinity of Poplar	20-million-gallon-per-day-capacity plant to be located adjacent to Tiber Dam in southwestern Liberty County
Distribution System	Nearly 3,200 miles of water supply main ranging from 2 inches in diameter in some of the outlying areas to 24 inches in diameter in the portion stretching from Poplar to Wolf Point	450 miles of transmission pipeline, which will connect with existing water supply mains. Water main sizes will range from 4 inches to 30 inches in diameter.
Sponsors	The Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation and the Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority	The Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy's Reservation (for the "Core" portion) and the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority (for the "Non-Core" portion)
Water Rights	A portion of the existing Missouri River water rights allocated to the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes	A portion of the existing water rights, as guaranteed to the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation under a settlement signed in December 1999 by President Clinton, may be utilized for the supply within the "Core" portion. Water rights for the "Non-Core" portion are yet to be negotiated.
Current Status	Work is intended in 2002, with the focus on obtaining the land where the water treatment plant is to be located and completing the design of that plant.	Members of Montana's delegation introduced project authorization legislation in both houses of the U.S. Congress in May 2001.
Schedule	Construction of the project, which may begin as early as federal Fiscal Year 2002, is expected to take at least 10 years.	Construction of the project, which may begin as early as federal Fiscal Year 2003, is expected to take 10 years, at a minimum.
Ownership, Operation, and Maintenance— Federally Funded Portion	The intake and water treatment plant, pipeline, and appurtenant facilities within the Fort Peck Reservation will be held in trust by the U. S. government on behalf of the Fort Peck Tribes. The U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, in cooperation with the Fort Peck Tribes, will supervise operation and maintenance of these portions.	The intake and water treatment plant at the location near Tiber Dam, the "Core" transmission line to the reservation, and the pipeline and appurtenant facilities within the reservation will be held in trust by the U.S. government on behalf of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy's Reservation. The Secretary of the Interior will assign overall responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the "Core" portion to either the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, or to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, in cooperation with the Tribe.
Ownership, Operation, and Maintenance— Intergovernmental Cost Share Portion	The Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority will own and operate the water mains and appurtenant facilities located outside of the Fort Peck Reservation.	The North Central Montana Regional Water Authority will own and operate the water mains and appurtenant facilities within the "Non-Core" portion (excluding the in-place infrastructure currently owned and operated by various communities, rural water districts, and colonies).

1. The "Core" portion consists of the intake and water treatment plant near Tiber Dam, the transmission line to the reservation, and the pipeline and appurtenant facilities within the reservation's boundaries.

Rural Water. . . continued from page 2

Water Rights

Both systems are related to compacts negotiated by DNRC's Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission.

The Fort Peck Compact, which was approved by the Montana Legislature in 1985 and by the Montana Water Court in 2001, contains a provision for water marketing by the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. Federal approval is necessary for such marketing. That federal legislation has not yet passed.

The Rocky Boy's Compact allocates 10,000 acre-feet per year (AFY) to the Chippewa Cree Tribe from water arising on the reservation. The federal authorization includes 10,000 AFY from water stored in Tiber Reservoir. The compact was approved by Congress and has been submitted to the Montana Water Court for entry of a decree. Another article on page 6 of this newsletter also deals with the Rocky Boy's Compact.

